

Moving Cities. Documenting Urban Space in American TV-Series

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CSI Las Vegas



Dexter



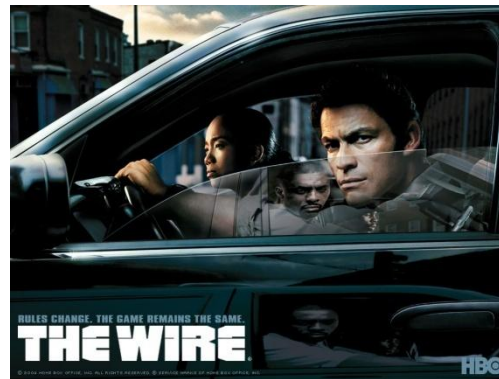
The Sopranos



Rescue Me



The Wire



The Shield



1. Introduction: city, landscape, and cinema
2. Kind images
 1. *CSI Las Vegas* (Las Vegas)
 2. *Dexter* (Miami)
3. Ambivalent cities
 1. *The Sopranos* (New Jersey)
 2. *Rescue Me* (New York)
4. The urban jungle
 1. *The Wire* (Baltimore)
 2. *The Shield* (Los Angeles)
5. Conclusion

Kind images of the American city

CSI Las Vegas (Las Vegas)



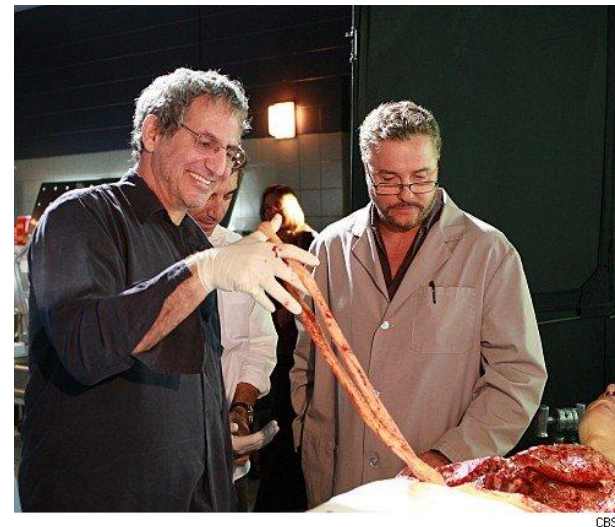
Dexter (Miami)



***CSI Las Vegas*: the real landscape is the human body**

- Place of paradoxes
- Dualism in the show: forensic method versus simulacra of the city
- “The glowing lights of the Strip are counterpointed by the dim blue sterility of the autopsy rooms” (D. Levente)

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Dexter: his moral ambiguity is reflected in the landscape

- Vigilante during the night; blood splatter at daylight
- Miami is neat and tidy, as in Dexter's killings
- Subverting the Gotich mise-en-scène: horror narrative within a bright and sunny latino Miami (Brown and Abbott)

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The ambivalent city

The Sopranos (New Jersey)



Rescue Me (New York)



The Sopranos: contrasting New York and the ‘Garden State’

- “Sopranoland” as an urban landscape of sleaziness, corruption and violence...
- Helping to build the collective identity of Jerseyans (L. Strate)
- New York, in contrast, is an escape, a fragmented collage of “postcards-like shots”



New York City is a “constant backdrop of the storyline (even in the opening), a postcard to contrast with the dark New Jersey world of the main character” (Lance Strate, 2003)

Rescue Me: the shadow of the tragedy

- A trauma the city can't never forget... faced with distant irony
- An amputated skyline = emotionally crippled characters
- Fragile city, danger in every corner, day and night
- Some glimpses from Ground Zero

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CLIP: firemen at Ground Zero (*Rescue Me*)



The urban jungle

The Wire (Baltimore)



The Shield (Los Angeles)



The Wire: a systemic critique of the modern city

- A realist Baltimore also plays a character
- “Relations of power and discipline are inscribed into the apparently innocent spatiality of social life” (E. Soja)
- Shows the ruin of the centripetal metropolis; spatial dehumanization
- A tragic city, bloody, fractured, depressed.

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CLIP: McNulty, Snot Bogie and the American city (*The Wire*)



The Shield: a savage urban jungle

- The back patio of Los Angeles , a different image, far away from the glamorous L.A.
- The city interferes in the series right from the production process (“desperation cinema”, filming with “two eyes open”)
- A melting pot with “un-meltable” elements



Los Angeles interferes in the series right from the production process (...) Filming is done with “two eyes open”, thus allowing the incidental and the spontaneous to become part of the narration.

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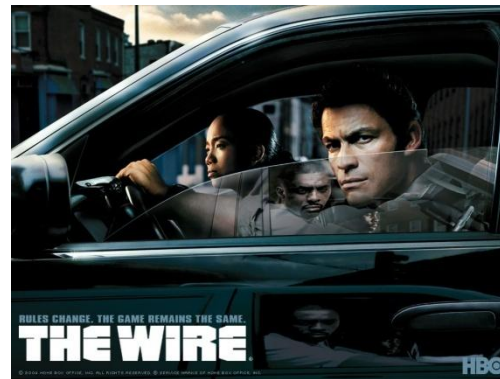
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